



## Employment outlook for occupations that don't require a formal educational credential

*Elka Torpey | November 2018*

There are plenty of occupations you can enter without a high school diploma or more education. And according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), there will be more than 6 million openings each year, on average, from 2016 to 2026 in occupations that typically don't require a formal educational credential—such as a high school diploma, a certificate, or a degree—for entry.

Although that's a lot of openings, the median annual wage for occupations requiring no formal credential was \$23,480 in 2017. That wage is less than the \$37,690 median for all occupations.

Read on to find out which of these occupations BLS expects to have the most openings, what they pay, and more.



## Projections by entry-level education

BLS analyzes the education typically needed for entry-level workers in the 819 occupations for which it projects employment. Of those occupations, BLS designates 105 as typically requiring no formal educational credential.

The BLS education designations focus on what is standard for most people entering an occupation for the first time. However, people who are already working in these occupations may have more education than is typically required for entry.

For example, in 2016–17, 25 percent of [food preparation workers](#) ages 25 and older had no formal educational credential; but about 38 percent of them had a high school diploma or its equivalent, and 37 percent had more education than that. Despite data showing that more than half of the workers already in the occupation had a high school diploma or more education, BLS found that people can enter this occupation without finishing high school. As a result, BLS counts food preparation workers among occupations requiring no formal educational credential.

Overall, BLS projects employment in occupations that don't require a formal educational credential to grow 6 percent from 2016 to 2026, about as fast as the average for all occupations.

## Openings by career field

This article features six career fields in which BLS projects many openings for occupations that typically don't require a formal educational credential:

- [Cleaning](#)

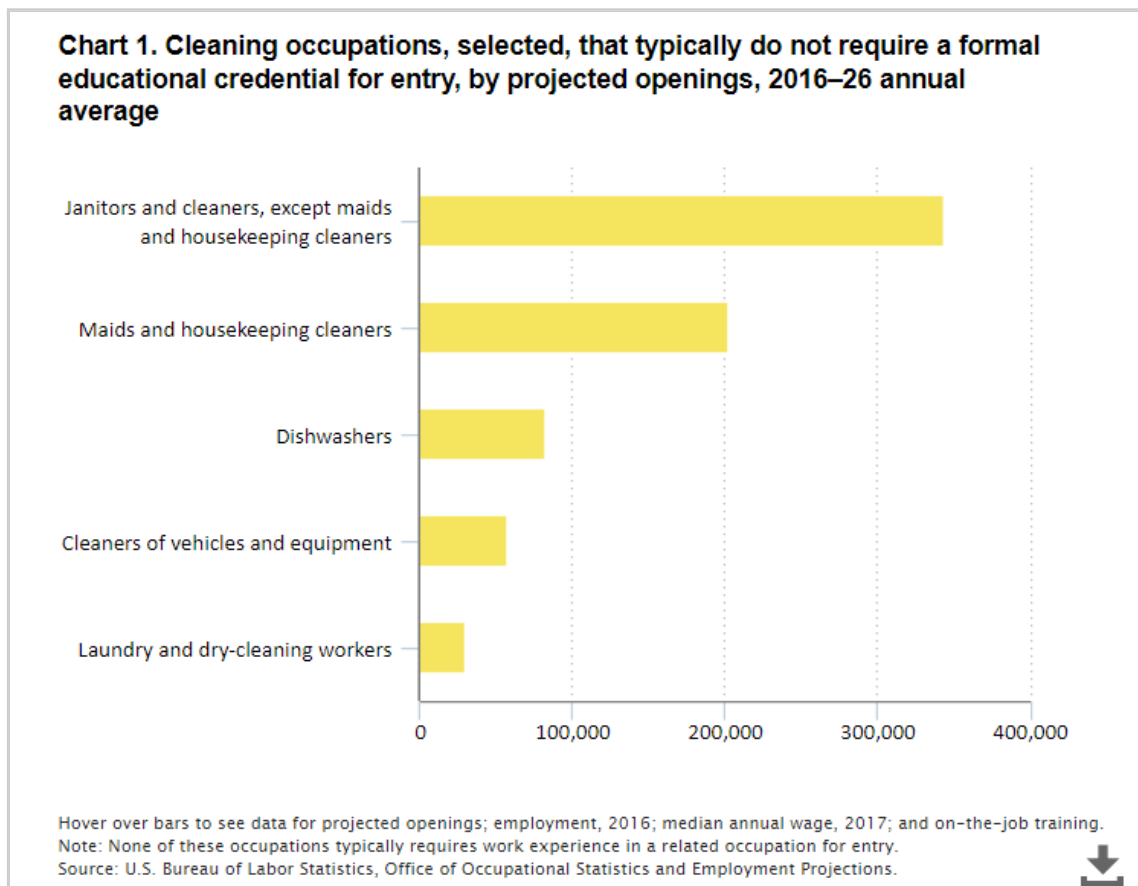
- [Construction and farmwork](#)
- [Cooking and baking](#)
- [Food service and related](#)
- [Sales](#)
- [Transportation and material moving](#)
- [Other](#)

For each career field, the charts that follow highlight the number of openings projected to arise each year, on average, from 2016 to 2026 in selected occupations. Most of these openings will result from the need to replace workers who leave an occupation permanently. But some of them are expected to be from newly created jobs.

The charts also include information about median annual wages and on-the-job training. (A median wage is a wage such that half of the workers in the occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less.) These wage data exclude those of self-employed workers. All of the occupations in the charts typically require on-the-job training for competency after workers are hired.

## Cleaning

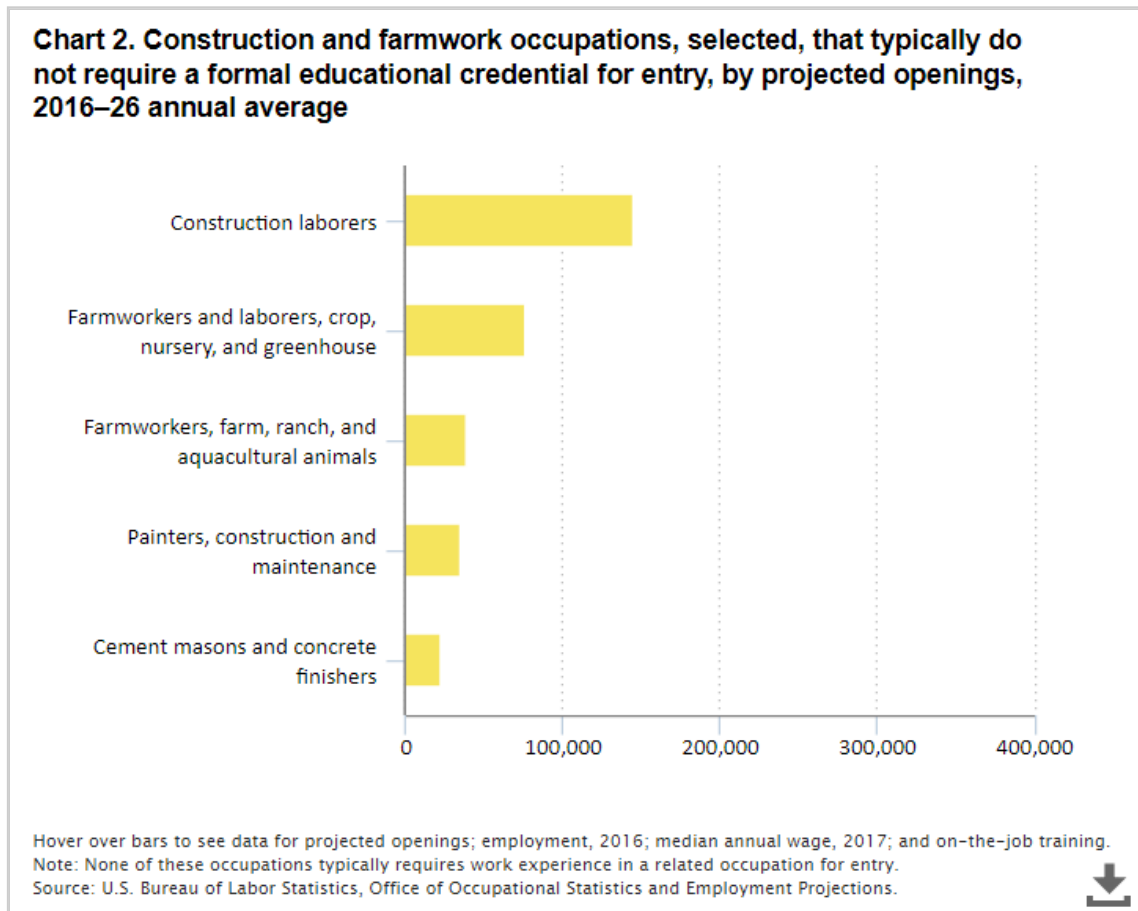
Chart 1 shows selected occupations in which workers do tasks to clean items or places. With more than 340,000 occupational openings projected to arise each year, on average, [janitors and cleaners](#) is expected to have the most openings of the occupations in the chart. This occupation also had the highest median annual wage of those in the chart: \$24,990.



Once hired, workers become competent in these occupations after short-term on-the-job training of 1 month or less.

## Construction and farmwork

In many of the [construction](#) and [farming](#) occupations in chart 2, workers are outdoors building structures, growing crops, or raising animals. Of the occupations shown in the chart, [construction laborers](#) is projected to have the most openings, on average, each year from 2016 to 2026.

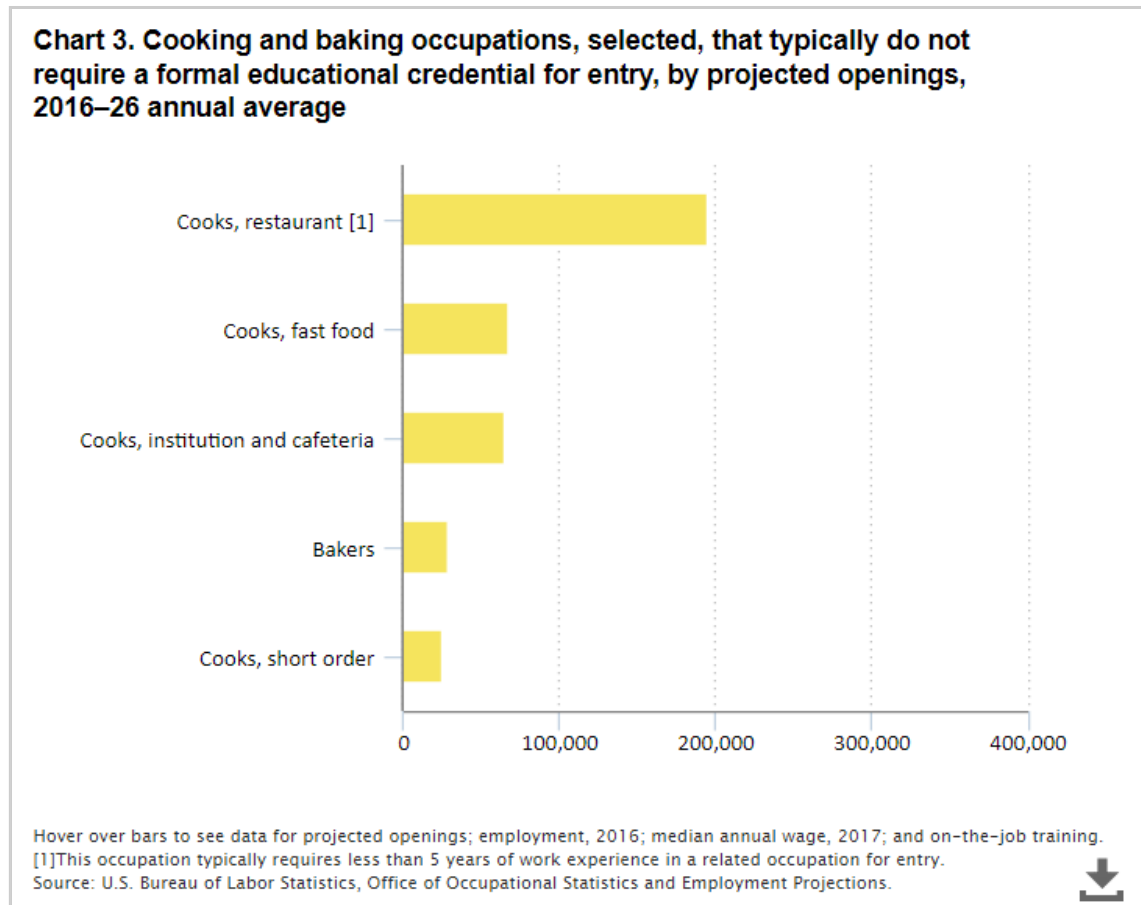


Among occupations that typically don't require a formal educational credential, those in construction had some of the highest wages. Two of the occupations in the chart—[painters](#) and [cement masons and concrete finishers](#)—had median annual wages that were higher than the median for all occupations. These two occupations also typically require up to 1 year of on-the-job training, which is more preparation than workers in the other occupations in chart 1 need in order to attain competency.

## Cooking and baking

Chart 3 shows selected occupations that involve culinary tasks. Of these, the occupation of [restaurant cooks](#) is projected to have the most openings.

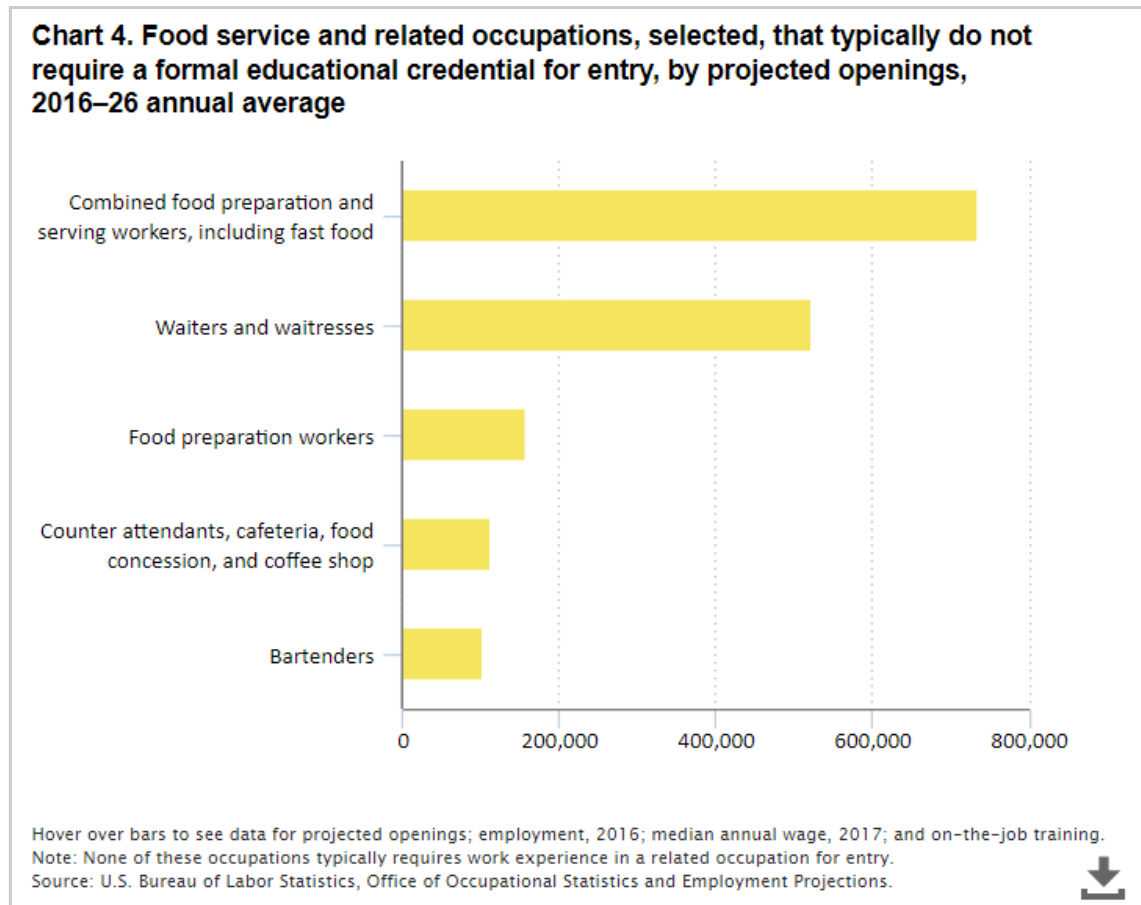




On-the-job training requirements vary for these occupations. [Bakers](#), for example, is an occupation that typically requires more training than do the others in chart 3. In addition to moderate-term on-the-job training, experience in a related occupation is typically required for entry-level restaurant cooks. [Institution and cafeteria cooks](#) had the highest median annual wage, \$25,860, of the occupations in the chart.

## Food service and related

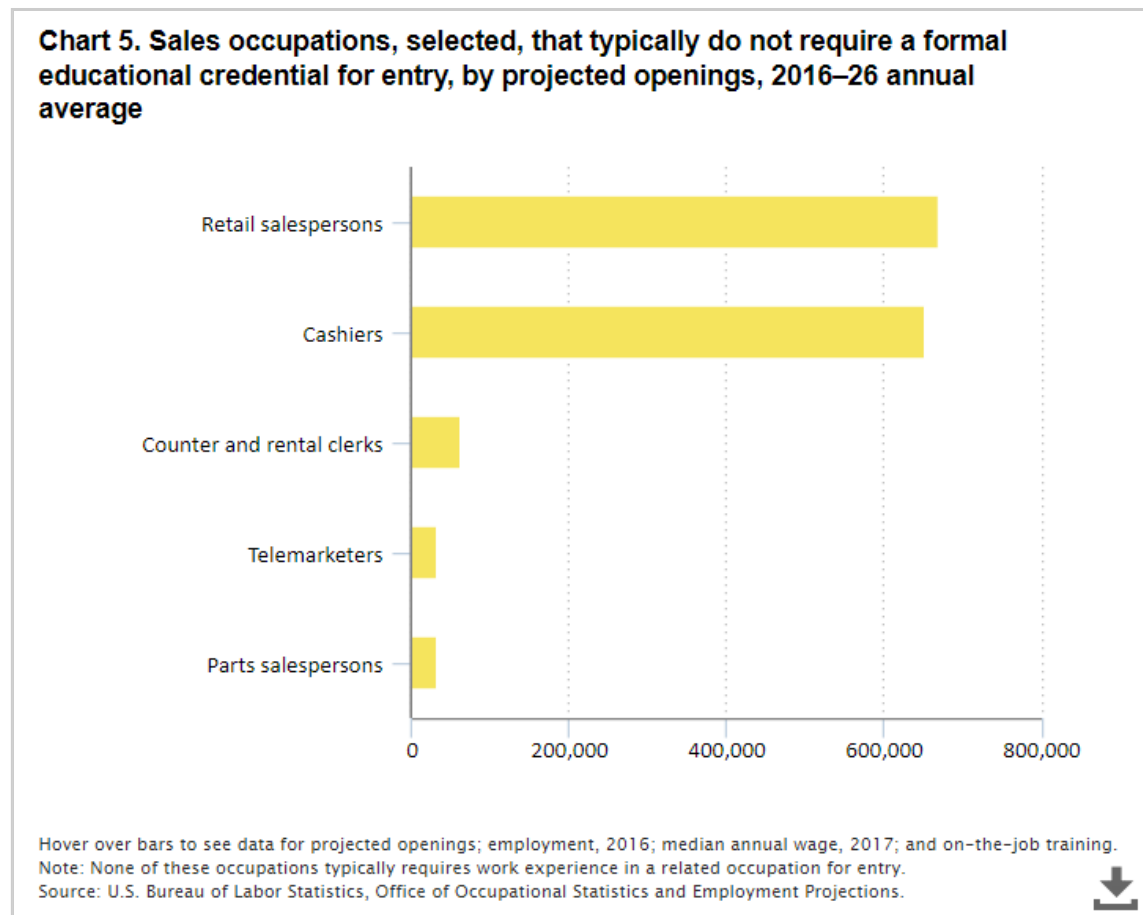
Workers in the occupations in chart 4 help to [serve and prepare](#). BLS projects many annual openings in these occupations in the coming decade. In fact, [combined food preparation and serving workers](#), including fast-food workers, is projected to have the most openings of any occupation in the economy: more than 730,000 of them each year, on average, from 2016 to 2026.



All of the occupations in the chart typically require short-term on-the-job training of 1 month or less. These occupations also paid some of the lowest wages of the occupations shown in this article. With a median annual wage of \$22,730, [food preparation workers](#) had the highest wage of the occupations in chart 4.

## Sales

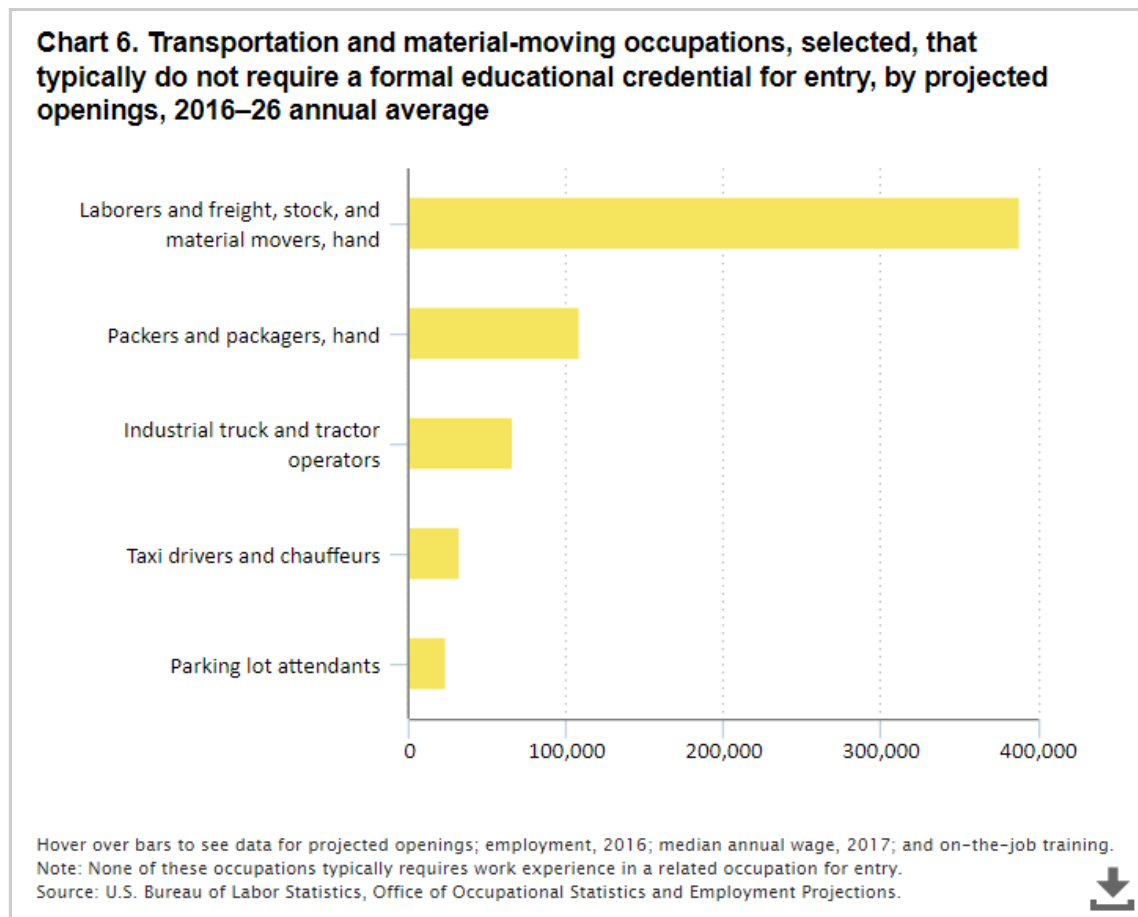
Workers in the [sales](#) occupations in chart 5 help customers buy products and services. With 670,000 openings each year, on average, the occupation of [retail salespersons](#) is projected to have the most openings of those in the chart—and the second most of any occupation for which BLS makes projections.



Short-term on-the-job training is typically required for competency in all of these occupations, except for [parts salespersons](#), an occupation that usually needs moderate-term on-the-job training. That occupation and two others in chart 5—counter and rental clerks and telemarketers—had a median annual wage above the median for occupations with no formal educational credential.

## Transportation and material moving

The [transportation and material moving](#) occupations shown in chart 6 involve tasks related to getting people and products where they need to be. [Hand laborers and material movers](#) is the occupation projected to have the most openings each year, on average, of the ones in the chart.

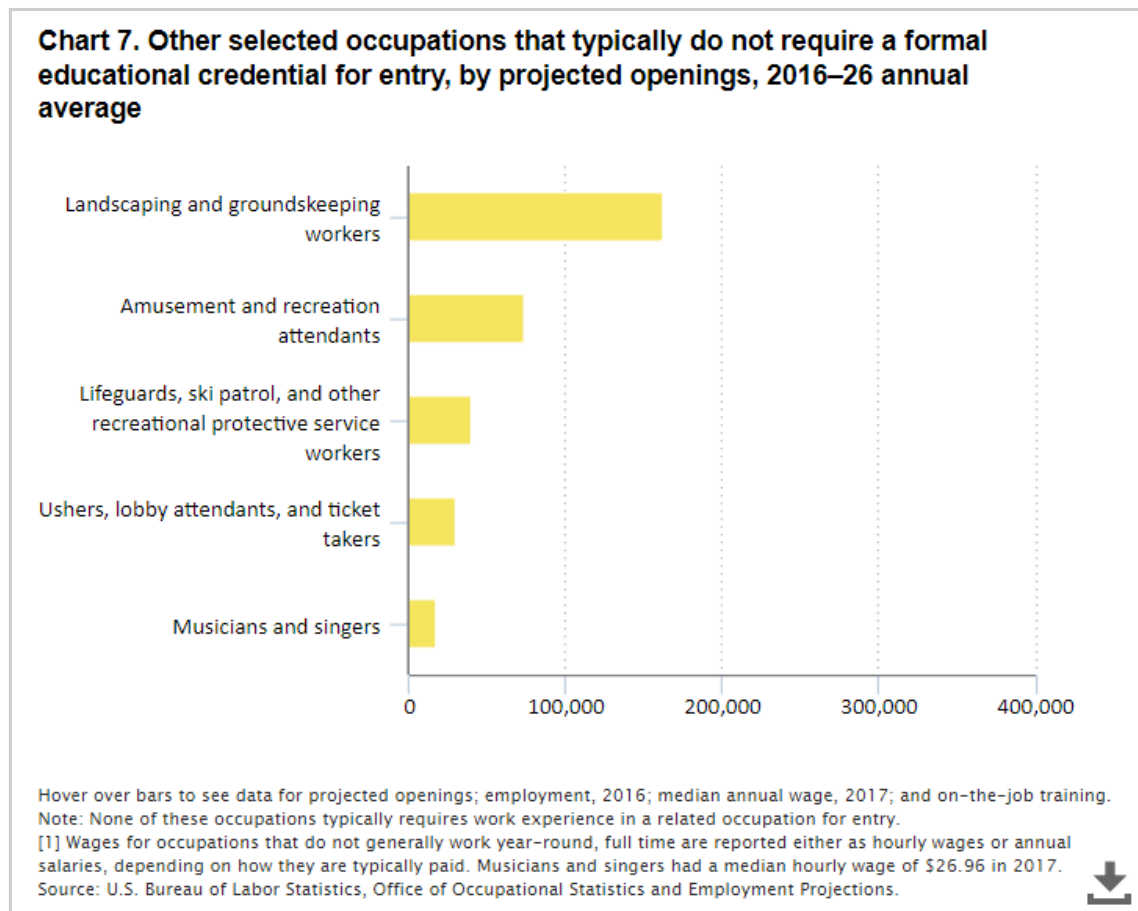


Workers typically attain competency in these occupations through short-term on-the-job training. [Taxi drivers and chauffeurs](#) may need a special taxi or limousine license, depending on the state or local municipality. [Industrial truck and tractor operators](#), which includes workers who operate forklifts in warehouses and storage yards, had the highest median annual wage of the occupations in the chart: \$33,630.

## Other

Whether they're involved in landscaping, recreational, or entertainment activities, workers in the occupations in chart 7 do a variety of tasks. Of these occupations, [landscaping and groundskeeping workers](#) is projected to have the most openings annually, on average, over the decade.





Short-term on-the-job training is required for all the occupations in chart 7 except [musicians and singers](#), which typically requires years of training to develop skills. Some occupations may have additional requirements; for example, lifeguards and ski patrol workers usually need training in first aid and CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). Landscaping and groundskeeping workers had the highest median annual wage of the occupations in chart 7.

## For more information

See the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) (OOH) to learn more about the occupations in this article, as well as hundreds of others. For example, the work environment section of the OOH highlights some of the top-emerging industries for workers in an occupation.

If an occupation that you had hoped to see wasn't included in this article, it may be designated as typically requiring a formal educational credential. Or it just might not have as many projected openings as the occupations selected for this article. To see the full set of occupational projections, including typical entry-level requirements, visit the [Employment Projections](#) site.

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